



Spotlight on Aidan Baker

Aidan Baker, aged 18, was the winner of the Young Person of the Year Award at the 2013/14 Shine a Light Awards. Aidan, who started I CAN's Dawn House School in Nottinghamshire at five with severe and complex speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), was recognised by judges for his instrumental role in the Raising Your Game Project led by Mencap in partnership with I CAN and Nacro.

Through the specialist environment I CAN's Dawn House School offered Aidan has developed from being an individual unable to communicate in an intelligible way with others, to a young man who contributes to writing and delivering training to adults about living with SLCN and what others can do to help. Aidan used to struggle to keep calm in his interactions and he now acts as a source of support and inspiration for other students in the school.

Raising Your Game is project led by Mencap in partnership with I CAN and Nacro for young people aged between 14 and 25, with a learning disability or communication difficulty, who have been in trouble with the police or are at risk of getting into trouble. When Aidan and his student colleagues put together a course for the project they decided it should be fun with lots of interactive exercises. Aidan took a lead role in a short film demonstrating some of the student's talents including showing off his own competition standard wrestling skills.

Aidan, from Derbyshire, has showed real resilience in the face of his communication difficulties – he often struggles with complex language and expressing himself yet he is consistently willing to volunteer for presenting various aspects of the course. Participants at the events Aidan delivered felt his stories were incredible brave, informative and demonstrated that SLCN is no barrier to communicating effectively.

In addition to Aidan's involvement in Raising Your Game, he has been a student governor, an active member of the school rock band as the lead vocalist and has pursued a sports leaders' course at Portland College. Aidan has also found time to give something back to other students as a keen participant in the school mentoring programme.

Aidan has been awarded the *Young Person of the Year Award* in recognition of his amazing progress and journey from being a youngster with severe and complex SLCN in primary to being a successful FE student. This journey will equip him for the rest of his adult life.